

September 2, 2008

GRAYMONT WESTERN U. S., INC. MINE EXPANSION EIS

PURPOSE OF THE BRIEFING DOCUMENT:

Graymont Western U.S. Inc (Graymont) proposes to expand its open pit limestone quarry to develop additional limestone reserves. This expansion would extend the life-of-mine for several decades.

ISSUES:

Graymont has operated a limestone quarry and plant in the Limestone Hills since 1982. Graymont mines high grade limestone from the Mission Canyon Formation of the Mississippian Madison Group. The Mission Canyon Formation forms the highest ridge of the northeast trending Limestone Hills, a small range of Paleozoic rocks located on the southeastern flank of the Elkhorn Mountain Range.

Graymont has submitted a proposal to expand limestone mining operations at its Indian Creek Mine and Plant located approximately four miles west of Townsend, Mont. The mine expansion would include portions of sections 27,28,29,32,33,and 34, T. 7 N. R. 1 E. and portions of sections 4,5,8,9,16,17,20,28,and 29, T 6 N., R. 1 E. The proposed expansion would be a continuation to the south of Graymont's existing permitted operations in the Limestone Hills. The mine expansion would include quarry areas, topsoil salvage areas, haul roads and waste rock placement areas, and concurrent reclamation. Approximately 2,060 acres of public land would be disturbed, of which 1,000 acres is represented by this proposed expansion. Proposed mining operations would last for approximately 50 years.

The environmental impact statement analyzes potential impacts to the Montana National Guard's Limestone Hills training range (including potential unexploded ordnance) in which the proposed expansion is located; and wildlife and cultural resources. Cumulative impacts will also be addressed. In addition, the draft EIS analyzes impacts to geology and minerals; Native American religious concerns; air quality; paleontology; lands and realty; fisheries and aquatic resources; range management; vegetation; soils; visual resources; recreation and wilderness; weeds; social and economic values; environmental justice; and threatened, endangered, candidate, and sensitive resources. An alternative (Modified Pit Backfill) was also added which enhances reclamation for the benefit of mule deer and bighorn sheep.

The consequence of delay likely would mean an interruption in the supply of ore to the mill and possible short-term layoffs.

MAIN DECISION OR MESSAGE:

The BLM and Montana DEQ have prepared an EIS to cover the proposed expansion. The draft EIS will be released early this fall

BUREAU PERSPECTIVE:

Public interest in the mine is moderate. There are no major environmental issues associated with the mine.

CONTACTS:

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